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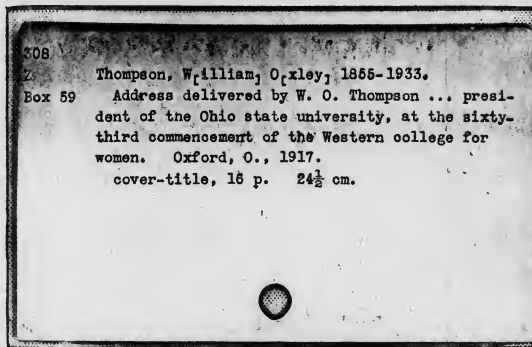
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AT THE

SIXTY-THIRD COMMENCEMENT *of*

THE WESTERN COLLEGE FOR WOMEN



OXFORD, OHIO

JUNE THIRTEENTH

1917

The Educated Woman And The New World

By W. O. Thompson, D. D., L. L. D.

One of the redeeming features of American life is its alertness. People in every circle are aroused as to the problems of modern life and are debating the conditions and proposing remedies. A sort of class consciousness has been developed. The labor classes have set themselves out as a distinct body of people demanding recognition and insisting upon their rights. From time immemorial the professional classes have had this class consciousness. Modern life is specialized and organized. Every distinct kind of workmanship has its organization and oftentimes the subdivision of classes is as marked as the specialization in a college faculty. It is not surprising, therefore, that woman as such should come into a sort of consciousness and develop her own problems. Whatever we may believe to be the cause of the modern division of industrial, social and economic life, it is clearly evident that the general and widespread education of the masses of the people has helped the movement forward. The penny newspaper printed in scores of languages and almost universally read, has carried to the hearthstone some impression and some discussion of practically every phase of modern life. The rights and wrongs of society, its vices and its virtues, are all matters of common intelligence. The rapid industrial development of the country combined with the unprecedented growth of our cities has made such an enormous demand for labor and at the same time has piled up such enormous wealth that modern society is a jungle of all sorts of people and conditions of life. Occupation brings together on our thoroughfares a most heterogeneous society. The offices, the schoolroom, the

social circle, and many others, bring together people of unequal condition, either financially, intellectually, or socially. One's most intimate associations as determined by daily contact are quite likely to have no reason based on acquaintance or family association. Wealth and occupation bring certain people together just as the public school seems to gather up everybody in the territory without any reference to anything else than the common belief in and need of education. In many places compulsory education has been forced, a condition that is not essentially different from the conditions created by the demands of wealth and industry. This miscellaneous mixture of people of all classes and conditions together with the rapid rise of a commercial spirit has emphasized the importance of the individual and put a severe test upon character.

In this evolution of American life women as a class have partaken of the spirit of the age and are more strongly emphasized than ever before in all forms of industrial and social activity. The American home has not remained apart from the influence of this increased activity of women. Naturally, therefore, the problem of woman's education has passed to the front. By common consent men must be educated for the careers they are to follow. The schools are expected, therefore, to provide the means by which men may be prepared for every sort of useful activity. If women are to be active they also must have such an education as will prepare them to take their place in a rapidly growing civilization.

In the earlier day, the education of women was regarded as a somewhat simple process. If she were the child of fortune or of luxury, her education consisted of a training in the polite languages, a knowledge of some literature as a basis of intelligent conversation, and a training in religious truth. The general field

of science, both pure and applied, was to her an unknown territory. The elementary education was practically alike for both boys and girls because it served as the foundation for the work of the seminary or finishing school. A college education for women is a modern development. The demand for it grew out of the theory that woman was as justly entitled to complete education as man and that facilities for education of women should be not at all inferior to those for men. The rise of co-education, especially in the west and northwest of the country, was due to the development of the high school and the state university. The east, a portion of the south, and a few of the cities in the north and west, persisted in the effort for women's colleges and the separation of the sexes in education. The normal schools the country over have been largely patronized by young women because practically all the teaching in the elementary schools of the country is in the hands of women. In the earlier day, the supervision of education was committed to men. It is largely so now. However, it is proper to remark that supervision of the elementary schools is oftentimes in the hands of competent women while the high schools and universities are employing a considerable number of women in instruction. Chicago for some years had a woman as superintendent of schools. A number of states now have women in office as county and state superintendents. In the state universities and in many of the denominational colleges where co-education prevails women are free to take advantage of the same facilities for education as are open to the men. In many of our colleges fully one-half of the students are women. Fifty years ago this would have been regarded as an intolerable condition. As the movement for the higher education of woman developed, the question was seriously discussed and we were told that it promised all sorts of disasters. It was confidently affirmed,

and still is by some people, that women can not stand the strain of higher education. The facts, however, go to show that college trained women are as sound and able physically as any other class of women. Those who denied woman's intellectual capacity have been embarrassed by the fact that she has steadily held her place with men. Indeed the complaint has arisen in some quarters that young women secure too large a number of the honors and prizes for undergraduate work. Her academic standing has too often averaged a higher percentage than that of the young men for any one now to affirm her incompetence. Certain of the men are objecting to the influence of women upon college life, basing their objection upon the fear that men will be feminized. Starting with her physical incapacity, her intellectual inferiority and her lack of taste for higher education, men have been steadily compelled to recognize that she is physically sound, intellectually equal, and uncomfortably ambitious in her ideas. It is a strange cry to hear in these days that men are in danger of being defeated and driven from the field by the unexpected success of the women. The men of the country, are, therefore, face to face with the problem of competition among themselves and of meeting the intellectual and moral standards of the women as well. In addition to this condition it is worth while to call attention to the fact that the scope of woman's education has greatly broadened. There is well-nigh universal recognition of the fact that woman must always be the home-maker and the home-keeper. However well a liberal education may serve a woman in her social and public life, it is recognized that the science of the home is as legitimate a study as the science of the field, of the farm, or of business. Not every man is educated in the science of agriculture, or of engineering, or in the profession of law, but some men are educated in each one of these fields. Not every woman will be educated in house-

hold science, or in the profession of teaching, or in the general field of literature, but some women will be educated in each one of these fields of human learning. The educated farmer, the educated lawyer, the educated teacher, and indeed all classes of educated men must have some bond of union and must eventually recognize the debt they owe to each other. This principle is quite as important and quite as fundamental in the education of woman. From necessity she will always have committed to her the most important fundamental education of children in the home and in the elementary schools. She will also have very much to do with determining the social and religious standards of society. It should not be overlooked also that the status of woman in civilization will be determined more by women than by men. She will be and become just about what she determines. Her salvation is largely in her own keeping.

Modern thought has come to recognize that woman's right to education and to a normal, healthful life is as secure and just as man's. Her right to choose for herself is as sacred and should be as well guarded as that of her brother. Indeed we may not proceed upon the theory that a stable and progressive civilization can be maintained with educated men and uneducated women. The progress of society opens a larger possibility before men and an equally large possibility for women. We shall be forced to abandon the theory that the only important people of a community are the office-holders. It is not at all necessary that woman be a justice of the peace or a lieutenant in the army to reach her highest usefulness any more than that men may reach their highest usefulness in such careers. We may always need lawyers and office-holders, but we shall surely need an infinitely larger number of substantial, sane and thoroughly educated men and women. There is therefore no necessary

conflict between the sexes. A percentage of women may enter the industries and the professions but their chief importance in modern life lies in their intelligence, their moral quality, and their social efficiency.

It may be well for us to guard against the fallacy underlying the assumption that women are too temporary in their professional careers. The fact of matrimony is no more a bar to woman's usefulness or an argument against her education than is the temporary character of men's occupations. Probably not 10% of the men educated in the profession of the law have maintained themselves by the practice of their professions. Five years after graduation the majority of the graduates from our medical schools are not engaged in the practice of their professions. It has been affirmed that 95% of business men sooner or later fail in business. This does not mean permanent failure. Men fail—try again and succeed. It is a notorious fact greatly to be regretted that too many men are only temporarily engaged in the profession of teaching. The happy thing about it all is that educated men are able to adjust themselves to the changed conditions of life and do not make life one stupendous failure simply because they did not spend it all in any one line of activity. It is not too much, therefore, to assume that the educated woman will be able to adjust herself to the changed and changing conditions of life with as much readiness as her brother. In the state of Ohio there are approximately 28,000 teachers. The average term of service is less than five years. In other words, practically 7,000 new teachers are required every year in order to open our schools. This does not mean that the teachers of Ohio are fickle or incompetent, but rather that they are able to adjust themselves to whatever type of life industrial and social conditions may require. In

this process of adjustment the women are quite the equal of the men. A mere engineer, a mere lawyer, or a mere farmer does not represent the high-water mark of efficiency or of manhood. The same principle is fundamentally true with the present generation of women.

It is not strange that in the preparation for and in the process of readjustment that comes with education women should find themselves in much the same condition as men. Education has been criticized for not being practical in the case of men and everyone has heard the story of some profound scholar who died in poverty,—as if poverty were the sin against the Holy Ghost. We hear less of this than we did twenty years ago. The reason for it lies in the fact that educated men are steadily coming to the front both in leadership and in the loyal following of intelligent leadership. No army can be made up exclusively of generals. It is important to have a loyal body of men who carry the guns. We are just now coming into an era of American civilization where the numerous college graduate has gotten into the ranks of our industrial, commercial, and social life. The result is that things are moving with very much more steadiness. The abuses that are being corrected in public life are due chiefly to the intelligent following of educated leaders by educated men. Now, in some such way woman is steadily coming to her place as an important factor in a balanced civilization. Her education is recent. She has developed a few leaders but not enough followers. Meantime, as with the men, a few freakish notions with vociferous advocates occupy the attention of the public to the neglect of the more important progress that is being made under the leadership of sane and rational women.

The important issue is, in the judgment of a mere man, that the educated women of the country shall

assume the responsibility of their position and develop competent leadership and loyalty in following that leadership. There is some justice in the protest on the part of women that their affairs have been dominated altogether too much by men. The signs of the time indicate that that domination will decrease and that, in a great area in which the interests of both men and women are common, there will be a mutual understanding, a better recognition of each others rights, a better co-operation in labor resulting in a better organization and a better balance from the home to the uttermost parts of civilization. In putting emphasis upon the importance of the assumption of this responsibility, we may as well concede that the so-called "new woman" has not always been a "thing of beauty and a joy forever." She has been more or less uncertain as to herself and her place in a constructive civilization. She has been a protest and sometimes an excess. This is not to say that there was not need of a new woman, but that the movement due to education will put increasing dignity and efficiency upon woman and soon dispose of the uncertainty and the excess. Her experience could easily be paralleled in the experience of men. If the sterner sex has not developed freaks and fancies; if it has not substituted noise for ideas; if it has not presented vanity among the newly rich; if it has not produced a monstrosity in the political boss; if it has not produced a demagogue, then the cartoonist and the historian alike have failed to understand their companions. Let us not, therefore, get excited or unduly alarmed if a great country like ours should develop a Carrie Nation or if by the sudden emergence of woman into the activity of education, social reform and other fields, there should appear on the surface a considerable army of extremists who are neither leaders nor followers. We have had women anarchists who are just as good or bad as men in the same field. The woman

striker will develop as many excesses as her brother. The movement for woman suffrage has set us all to thinking and that is not entirely a bad thing. On the general issue the country will sometime be sane and reasonable. Many of our fathers in the north, thought that the ballot was essential to the freedom of the colored race. Most of their sons regard that as a mistaken theory and an unfortunate practice. The conservative element of the country today recognize that the extension of the ballot is not necessarily an improvement of political conditions. If it could be wisely restricted and then rationally developed, we should probably reach a desired condition more promptly than by any other method. In the turmoil of public opinion upon these questions the conservative elements of society have the path of true progress and try to avoid excesses. We shall neither turn our faces backward nor plunge over Niagara. The ideas of men will dominate only so far as they approve themselves to the sober judgment of educated women.

This responsibility will reorganize the industrial life of women. Just now the world is struggling with the evils of industrialism. The two chief evils are in the abuse of corporate power and in the neglect of the social, intellectual, and moral conditions of the laborer. In the corporate management women and children have had little part. In the other extreme they have furnished much of the labor and endured many of the abuses. Too many enormous profits have been due to the exploitation of helpless labor. The organization of the laboring men has produced a great betterment in their conditions. At the same time it has developed many unreasonable conditions and excesses among the laboring class. On the whole, however, we are steadily emerging into a clearer judgment as to the rights on both sides of this great problem. In so far as woman is and will continue to

be an important factor in our industrial life, we shall expect to see similar excesses and similar betterment. It is to the educated woman of an awakened conscience that we shall look for a rational development as to right ideas and as to her place and her duty in the industrial development of the country. Nowhere is this condition better illustrated, perhaps, than in our educational work. The great majority of our teachers have been and now are women. They will continue to be the majority for all time to come. On the whole they are better fitted for teaching than men. For a variety of reasons many of our educated leaders will always be men. We shall, however, develop a much greater list of educated leaders who will be women. In the National Education Association this condition has been very manifest. We have had a majority of women in attendance for a series of years. The program has been chiefly masculine. The recent movement for a better recognition of women is founded not merely on the theory of the majority but on the more solid ground that these women have a contribution that ought to be made in order that our educational theory and practice shall be better balanced. The women teachers of the country are carrying a good deal of the burden and ought to assume more of the responsibility for our education. The temporary character of woman's occupancy of this calling does not militate against this position. An increasing number of women will give their whole lives to the cause of education just as men do. We are striving to the utmost to secure more permanency in the teaching profession. This means that we want more men to stay in the business; it also means that we want more women to do the same thing. If this condition obtains, as I firmly believe it will, then women will take the profession of education more seriously, and those who retire from active service by reason of matrimony or for any other reason will continue to

manifest an abiding interest in the development of our education. These women who retire from teaching will constitute the great army of loyal educated followers who will hold up the hands of the permanent leaders in our educational progress.

The most distinctive feature of woman's influence in education and in social interests is the movement for better education in home conditions. What is called household or domestic science which is already conceded to cover the question of foods, household sanitation, household decoration, household art, and some applied subjects, is being very steadily developed. It has reached out already into the field of the physical condition of the child as illustrated in medical and dental inspection and the war on the great white plague known as tuberculosis. Men and women are working together in this cause because both are interested and involved in it. Woman, however, is the chief teacher in this field. A new era of development is bringing an appreciation of these fundamental things. The science of the house is as important and as dignified as the science of the field. Domestic science was originally affiliated with agriculture for manifest reasons. We are coming to understand, however, that the home is more universal than the wheat field or than the cotton field. The so-called fundamental industries touch the home, the farm, the mine, and the manufacturing establishment. In one of these, woman will hold undisputed sway and in some degree she will be influential in determining the character of all others. This is neither a political issue nor a sex problem. It is a racial question in which both men and women will find that the comfort and happiness of society are necessarily involved. This suggests the great field mentioned a moment ago in which men and women will have a common interest and therefore ought to have a most cordial co-operation.

We can not build homes on sex lines, nor can we maintain our homes by political maneuvering. Truth and science must have their sway in education, religion, and all social conditions. Neither of these can be the exclusive movement of one sex nor can either sex be indifferent to their importance. There may be some justification for the temporary leadership of men in these things, but intelligent people will increasingly appreciate that the house can not be divided against itself and that truth and the application of science can not be promoted along party lines nor sustained without the sympathetic or active co-operation of both men and women.

The common conception has been in the minds of many that the education of woman and her increasing participation in the affairs of the world are liable to make war upon the American home which is the most cherished institution of society. The plea this morning is to call attention to the fallacy underlying this conception. If it is true that "it is not good for man to be alone" that statement should be made to cover more than the simple question of matrimony. It seems to me to make woman's duty quite as imperative as man's. The problem is to define that duty, to assume that responsibility, and proceed with the work of social betterment.

And now what shall we say in view of the new world that shall emerge when this world wide contest has ended. No event since the dawn of the Christian era has involved greater issues than the present world war. Measure it by the numbers involved, the money expended, the forces assembled, the area covered by the armies or by the territory of the nations engaged and the present war has no parallel and no equal. In comparison the Protestant Reformation was a quiet peaceful transformation of religious organization accompanied with the uprising of intellectual freedom.

The French Revolution was in large degree a local affair. Our war for independence left most of the world untouched. Our Civil War settled the question of a nation's perpetuity locally, but with negligible effect upon Europe. We are now engaged in a world wide contest to see whether Lincoln's Gettysburg speech may be of universal application. The courageous words of our President in his latest utterance, the letter to Russia, presents to the world anew the issue and challenges all nations to come to higher ground by recognizing the brotherhood of men. He goes unmistakably to the heart of things when he insists on righting the wrongs of the war, the enthronement of righteousness and adequate measures to prevent the recurrence of the hideous treacheries so abundant since 1914. This last state paper is a prophecy of the new world into which we are steadily moving. In that new world woman will be more effective than now. She will occupy a higher place in the councils of the world. Her point of view on many ethical questions will influence our thinking. At present woman is showing her heroism, her spirit of sacrifice and her efficiency in service in a way that will astound the world when the story shall be written. We think of her in munition factories; in our means of transportation as conductor, driver and officer; in the hospital as nurse and friend; in the home community as the active supporter of the Red Cross and in a thousand ways as the efficient servant of the war. She has not wasted time in debating the causes of the war but has devotedly given herself to the cause of humanity. It should not be overlooked that in the current history of the war woman's pen has written some of the best of the literature. All this splendid contribution to the great contest has demonstrated woman's capacity in wider areas than ever before. Mere gallantry on the part of men will not meet the situation or be an adequate reward. Woman has

earned her honors and has demonstrated her right to recognition in the affairs of the world. Now war is one of the occasions when we develop the rarest virtues and the basest vices. Men are seen at their best and at their worst. The peace proclamation is usually followed with economic and moral depression. The reconstruction following war is not merely political; it is moral and spiritual as well. It took the United States about a quarter of a century to recover from the ill effects of the Civil War notwithstanding the fact that slavery had been abolished and a free government perpetuated. Out of this wicked war in which unspeakable atrocities have been repeated and multiplied will come a spirit of investigation with a disposition to hold to strict account those who have violated with ruthless hand all the standards of morals and decency heretofore maintained. We shall abandon once and for all the supremacy of force and with it will go to oblivion a code of morals built upon man's physical prowess and superiority. Into the decision of these social and ethical questions, woman must enter as by right and insist that one-half of the human race has a right to a voice as to how the other half behaves, economically, socially, and politically. You will observe that President Wilson has made the issue clear when he declares that we are fighting to make the world a safe place for democracy. He does not propose to enforce a democracy upon the rest of the world, but he does propose to protect a democracy against the selfish attacks of autocracy. There is no proposal to interfere with the right of any people to choose the form of government they desire but the proposal is to protect those people in the enjoyment of that right. As he says, "We are fighting for the liberty, the self-government and the undictated development of all peoples." The right of life is to be as sacred in Belgium as in Germany or the United States. Bigness and brute force are not to be en-

throned nor are rights and privileges to belong only to the strong. Now such issues can never be settled in a one sided way or by the separation of the sexes. Into these great issues woman will come with all her rights. She is one half of the humanity for which we are fighting. Woman is doing her full share in the fight and will make her full contribution to the settlement. More than that she will be in the world more vitally than ever before in the new order of things. The generation of reconstruction that will follow the war can not be blind to the madness and the folly of these days. Let us mercifully hope that the generation that planned the war will be quietly in their graves before the verdict of the next generation is announced. History will never be able to explain much less to justify this attack on humanity. The new ethics will be more refined and more cosmopolitan. Selfishness, vanity and ambition will be restrained by the common recognition of their anti-social and destructive character.

And now, my young friends, I congratulate you upon the opportunity to bear a part in this great transformation just as I congratulate the young men upon whom the nation laid its hand last week. The topsy turvy world like a ship upon the stormy sea, must right itself as the wild waves of men and passion cease. The significance of these days is yet an unknown quantity. Our American heart rejoices however, as president Wilson lifts before the world a nation wronged and endangered, conscious of the world menace going forth to war without rancor or selfish desire, challenging the world to forsake the traditions of centuries and live a free people. This is a tremendous appeal to the intelligence and conscience of the world for responsible living. For the first time in history the whole world is organized in a great contest with humanity as the one great issue. For the last

analysis this is the issue of Christianity. It has been said that Christ discovered or revealed humanity anew. Now it would appear that we are to confirm the discovery much as in 1295 the English confirmed the Magna Carta wrung from the unwilling mind of King John at Runnymede. In that confirmation of humanity in the interests of freedom, it is just possible that the Prince of Peace may appear in all his glory and the Sermon on the Mount be reenforced as the new decalogue of the nations. If so, I congratulate the men and women who shall have part in ushering in the happy day and who shall gather the fruits of righteousness which are peace and joy forever.

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